# DO LIBRARIES CREATE SOCIAL CAPITAL?

by

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This study analyzes the role of the library in creating social capital in the community. A set of public libraries was randomly selected from a list of communities identified as having high or low social capital. Specific aspects of library administration and services are tested against social capital levels to identify factors that may contribute to or depend upon social cohesion in the community. Some of these factors include community support for the library in the form of local and non-governmental funding, salaries and benefits, volunteer effort and program attendance. Specific types of programs and characteristics of targeted audiences are also studied to determine if library programs promote the types of social relationships that create social capital in the community.

Headings:

Librarianship -- Social aspects.

Public relations of libraries -- Public libraries.

Library Programs.

Volunteers.

## INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s, Robert Putnam and a team of sociologists found that regional governments in Italy were better able to carry out their administrative functions in areas where strong traditions of civic engagement existed, including participation in such simple activities as choral societies and soccer clubs, voting and newspaper readership (Putnam, 1993, cited in Putnam, 2000, p. 345). Government, as a public institution, relies on the strength of ties and generalized trust in the community for effective administration and leadership. This social capital, the superglue of trust and civic interest in the community, literally provides the social funds that make public institutions work. Many other organizations, companies and institutions are currently exploring the possibilities afforded by strong social networks and levels of generalized trust in the community in the context of economic and political development and organizational effectiveness.

Libraries are just beginning to join in their efforts, but have been quick to claim that their institutions actually create social capital (Kranich, 2001). Indeed, libraries have tremendous potential to bridge social gaps across income levels, gender, age, race, ethnicity and disability and to create dialog at a very simple, grass roots level due to their extensive presence in the country and their

pluralistic, service-oriented mission. But proof must be given to sustain that claim.

The social capital model requires library administrators to consider the social context in which their organizations operate and to demonstrate that capital has actually been created in tangible ways, under specific conditions, through specific programs or services and in specific quantities. The task is daunting given the fledgling state of the theory itself, but there is probably no comparable nationwide set of institutions that could contribute more to the theory's advancement than the library.

To determine the ways in which the library contributes to social capital in a community, we must first identify the aspects of the library and its services that seem to increase or decrease social capital in the community and then study those factors over time to determine causation. This will shed light on how libraries influence social capital levels and on the sources of capital the library can rely upon in times of change or challenge. This current study will begin to answer some of those questions by identifying certain characteristics that are common to public libraries located in areas of high and low social capital.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Social capital, like human and physical capital, refers to a productive ability. In the case of human capital, training, education and skill levels determine individual productivity, and in the case of physical capital, materials and equipment enable productivity. Sociologists are currently identifying the productive mechanisms of social capital, the relationships among people in a community that can produce social results beyond the capabilities of any individual or single organization. Factors such as trust, participation in civic activities, norms of social behavior and social distance between groups are believed to contribute to the ability of a community to achieve common goals and initiate change (Putnam, 2000, Usulaner, 2000). Social capital allows a group to achieve ends that are not possible by individuals alone or even by individuals within their own family structure. James Coleman, a modern founder of social capital studies, differentiates between types of capital and emphasizes the productive, enabling mechanisms of social relationships,

> "Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence.... social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. It is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implementations of production" (Coleman, 1990, p. 301-302).

Other terms that have been used for social capital include "social cohesion" and "communal resources" (Ritzen et al. 2001, Inkeles, 2000).

Though Robert Putnam did not create the theory of social capital, his works, particularly the bestseller Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community (Simon and Schuster, c2000), have popularized the concept. Putnam traced the decline of enrollment and participation in many civic organizations in the United States between the 1960s and 1990s, attributing many social woes to civic disengagement. Declining social and economic welfare, poor health and education and low levels of political participation all result from social detachment. Sociologists from many other research organizations from the World Bank to the Danish Cooperative Diary Movement have also taken up the challenge to define social capital (Ritzen et al., 2000, Svendsen and Svendsen, 2000). They seek to identify the productive power of social relationships, trust, reciprocity and civic participation in quantitative or qualitative terms and they seek to understand the influence of this type of capital on countries, organizations, and even individuals.

Thus far, sociologists have identified several social functions that depend upon high levels of social capital and that suffer in its absence: political activism; norms of protection (especially for children) beyond the family structure; proprietary business relationships; levels of education; healthy, productive neighborhoods; economic prosperity; individual health and happiness; democratic citizenship; and effective policy-making (Coleman, 1990, Putnam, 1999, Ritzen et al., 2000). These functions rely on the relationships of trust and social cohesion in the community, which provide resources to individuals that would not otherwise be available to them.

Many organizations are anxious to identify ways in which this model can be applied to benefit a community and promote the organizational mission. Recent applications of the social capital model have been used in studies of immigration, economic development, business, political and institutional effectiveness, post-socialist transition to democratic institutions, agricultural production and community welfare, and even cooperative dairy farming (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993, Granovetter, 1985, Woolcock, 1998, Prusak and Cohen, 2001, Dess and Shaw, 2001, Ritzen et al., 2000, Putnam, 1993, Aberg, 2000, Lyson et. al., 2001, Svendsen and Svendsen, 2000). These studies have not only contributed significantly to their particular disciplines but also to the development of the social capital model. For example, from the business perspective, one study on voluntary turnover in the workplace has shown that "knowledge workers exhibit greater loyalty to their colleagues and their profession than to their employing organization" (Dess and Shaw, 2001). Hence, as rates of voluntary turnover in the workplace continue to rise, it is in the corporate organization's interest to reassess its hiring practices. Dess and Shaw hypothesize that hiring whole groups of professionals with intertwined social connections that enable large collaborative projects could be more advantageous than hiring disconnected individuals.

In the political and policy making realm, the social capital model sheds light on why government and public institutions perform better or worse over time. Politicians and policy makers are especially keen to understand social capital, as the connectedness in the community has been proven to directly

affect their political future (through increased voting rates) and the degree to which they are able to implement change. A recent study written by sociologists at the World Bank titled "On 'Good' Politicians and 'Bad' Policies: Social Cohesion, Institutions and Growth" identifies a lack of social capital as an explanation for ineffective policy-making in many countries (Ritzen et al., 2000). It finds that even the most well intentioned, highly knowledgeable political representatives are limited in their ability to effect change by the amount of generalized social trust in the communities in which they operate. In effect, the level of social cohesion in the community defines the political "wiggle-room" within which politicians, government and other public institutions can operate, and it determines how efficiently organizations can carry out their tasks (Ritzen et al., 2000, Putnam, 1993).

While these benefits have been demonstrated, sociologists do not agree on the factors that *create* social capital. Does trust between people beget civic activity or does participation in associations and other civic activities create trust? Do people become more involved in their communities when institutions provide the venues and mechanisms for interaction or do community venues and mechanisms for interaction depend on prior levels of trust and an aptitude for collaboration in the community? Conversely, do high rates of violence, low levels of child welfare, cultural and ethnic distance diminish the collective desire to collaborate or does a lack of collaboration exacerbate a community's ability to confront violence, child welfare and social distance? Social capital, as a construct, suffers from the proverbial chicken-and-the-egg phenomenon. But,

there is agreement that social capital is generative (trust begets trust) and it can be cyclical or may be exhaustible, though the upper limits are unknown. As research continues in this area, the factors of causation will become more defined.

One important trend in social capital research is the distinction between two types of relationships that rely on trust: bonding and bridging relationships (Putnam, 2000). Bonding relationships bring people of common backgrounds together while bridging relationships bring people together who would not normally come together. Bridging relationships are typically those that span the gaps of age, gender, race, ethnicity, language, disability, and more. Bridging relationships occur most often in business, education and cultural events or organizations, while bonding relationships occur in ethnic, religious, gender-related or age-related organizations. Both types of relationships can produce social capital though it is very likely that bridging relationships create greater, more sustainable levels of trust, hence greater social capital over time (Putnam, 1999, Uslaner, 2000).

Two other activities have been identified as important behavioral demonstrations of trust: charitable giving and volunteering. Charitable giving both depends upon trust and produces it, though volunteering tends not to produce it (Uslaner, 2000). The three factors, bridging and bonding relationships, charitable giving and volunteering may be used as indicators of levels of social capital that an organization can rely upon and potentially contribute to.

Another aspect, city size, has been debated as a critical factor in encouraging or discouraging relationships of trust and reciprocity. In general, sociologists do not consider it as important. For example, J. Eric Oliver considered city size in his study on civic involvement in metropolitan America and concluded there is no optimum size in which civic engagement flourishes more than others. He agrees that greater political alienation works against collective engagement in urban areas and that smaller places tend to be civically richer. Yet, as large cities subdivide into smaller ones or people move from cities to surrounding suburbs, the effect on civic engagement is actually negative. Levels of trust and of civic activity do not increase as a result. Subdivisions of cities and growth in suburbs tend to divide the community further along economic and ethnic lines, only exacerbating already low rates of trust and civic engagement. City size does not predict social capital levels. Economic and social diversity play a far more significant role in the social capital model than the size of a city or density of population (Oliver, 2000, Fukuyama, 1995).

Once sociologists identify all or most of the factors that create social capital, the next challenge will be to measure them uniformly across communities. Indeed, current social capital studies often tackle both issues at once; they simultaneously test for causation and identify effective methods for measurement and comparison. The goal of most social capital research is to come up the tools for community benchmarking and analysis that public institutions and leaders can use to encourage greater civic engagement. Some recent studies focus on measures of trust, social distance, involvement in

associations and civic activities, and economic equality through redistribution of income to the middle class as factors that define social capital levels over time (Putnam, 1999, Uslaner, 2000, Ritzen et al, 2000). Tools used to measure these factors include surveys, time-series analysis, observation and other methods, often relying on data from well-known sources such as the Gini Index of Inequality, the General Social Survey 1972-1998, the World Values Survey 1981, statistics on volunteering and membership in many non-profit and social organizations and Hofstede's social distance factors (Inkeles, 2000, Uslaner, 2000).

As this current study on the library's contribution to social capital began, there was only one benchmarking study available that attempted to capture the level of social capital in specific communities in the United States. It was the Saguaro Seminar's *Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey* sponsored by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 2000. The *Survey* analyzed 40 county/city/regional areas in the United States. The areas are ill defined, but the geographic level is smaller than the state. For each geographic area, the survey measured 11 indicators of social capital in the communities: social trust, inter-racial trust, conventional politics, protest politics, civic leadership, associational involvement, informal socializing, diversity of friendship, giving and volunteering, faith based engagement and social capital equality. Though some of the attributes are questionable, and sample sizes were small, it was the best and only benchmarking study available.

More recently, Joshua Galper of The Urban Institute, published a working paper on the Internet entitled *An Exploration of Social Capital, Giving and Volunteering at the United States County Level* (The Urban Institute, n.d.). This paper appears to provide better benchmarking data than the Saguaro Seminar's *Survey* and is recommended for future social capital studies. Not only does the author attempt to arrive at a social capital index at the county level, a much more agile geographic parameter for comparative studies, but it also measures more pertinent, key indicators of social capital and important output behaviors such as disposition towards giving and volunteerism. Galper measures social capital by the number of small businesses, newspaper readership rates, annual payroll of membership organizations per capita, including churches, political and civic associations, crimes reported per capita (a "distress" variable), education levels, and population age (The Urban Institute, n.d.). A measure of trust is certainly missing in this formula as well as other factors he mentions such as religious and ethnic diversity, but the items identified are ones that can characterize the social makeup and divisions of the community. When that characterization, or measure, is compared against the potential for giving and volunteering in the community and actual giving and volunteering, a powerful construct of social capital can be made with specific social inputs and specific behavioral outputs that create trust in the community.

Surprisingly, very little research on social capital has been done with regards to public libraries. Even Robert Putnam did not address public libraries as organizations that can potentially create (or even depend upon) social capital

in his book Bowling Alone. A review of the literature has found no in depth studies that analyze social capital in the field of library science. In fact, prominent people in the field have encouraged more research in this area (Kranich, 2001, Preer, 2001). This study will begin to delve into the libraries' contribution to and dependence on social capital in the community, particularly in terms of library programs, volunteering, local and non-governmental funding.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, forty public libraries were randomly selected from communities in the United States with high social capital and forty were selected from communities with low social capital. For each library, data about local and non-governmental funding, volunteering, salaries, program attendance and types of library programs were gathered from various print and electronic resources and a Spearman correlation test was run against them to identify specific factors that correlate with social capital levels in the community.

The following communities were chosen for this study based on their social capital scores:

| High Social Capital | Low Social Capital |
|---|---|
| Rural South Dakota | Central Oregon |
| Seattle, Washington | North Minneapolis, Minnesota |
| Montana | East Tennessee |
| Bismarck, North Dakota | Boston, City of, Massachusetts |
| Grand Rapids, City of | Chicago Metro, Illinois |
| Boulder County, Colorado | Los Angeles County, California |
| Kalamazoo County, Michigan | Peninsula/Silicon Valley, California |
| Lewiston-Auburn, Maine | Phoenix/Maricopa County, Arizona |
| Detroit Metro, 7 Cities, Michigan | San Diego County, California |
| Minneapolis, Minnesota | Houston/Harris County, Texas |

A data set from the Saguaro Seminar's *Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey* was used to identify communities with high and low social capital. Of the eleven variables measured in that study, an average was taken

and the communities were sorted by the average. The ten communities with the highest average were considered communities with high social capital and the ten communities with the lowest average were considered communities with low social capital. Rural South Dakota and Chicago Metro, Illinois were eliminated from the study due to insufficient data about the libraries on the State Library or library websites. Minneapolis, Minnesota and North Minneapolis, Minnesota were eliminated due to a repeat appearance in both the high and low social capital lists. Finally, eight communities with high social capital and eight communities with low social capital were selected for the study.

Next, public libraries in the target communities were identified in the American Library Directory (R. R. Bowker, 54th edition, 2001-2002). Libraries categorized as "P" for Public and that are not State Libraries or libraries focused on a special population or subject (such as the deaf, the blind, focus on business, etc.) were selected. Branch and central locations were considered equally and independently during the selection process, assuming that a branch is closest to the community it serves. For each community, five libraries were selected randomly for the study. If insufficient financial and program data were available for a library, the library was eliminated. If data for most of the libraries selected for a community were insufficient, the set would be replaced with a new, randomly selected set of libraries. If a branch was selected but not the main branch, and financial data was only available for the entire system, the main branch would also be included in the study.

In total, 45 libraries/branches were selected in eight communities with low social capital and 27 libraries/branches were selected in eight communities with high social capital using the described methodolgy. Of the 27 libraries in communities with high social capital, financial figures were gathered for 13 of them and of those, seven included data for volunteer hours. Program data was collected for 20 of the high social capital libraries.

Of the 45 libraries/branches with low social capital, financial figures were gathered for 12 of them and of those, five included data for volunteer hours. Program data was collected for 40 of the low social capital libraries.

For each selected library, annualized data were collected from the Public Library Data Service Statistical Report 2001 for Fiscal Year End in 2000, from statistical resources on the State Library website, from annual reports with Fiscal Year End in 2000 posted on the library's website, and from other statements on the library's website, in that order of precedence (Public Library Association, 2001). Financial figures that were collected from the Public Library Data Service include local and non-governmental funding, salaries and benefits, program attendance and total operating income. Typically this information was only available for the main branches or for single libraries that are not part of a system.

Certain calculations were made with the financial data for purposes of comparison. Local and non-governmental funding were calculated as a percentage of operating income (Local Income/Operating Income and Non-governmental Income/Operating Income). Salaries and benefits were also

collected from the Public Library Data Service and calculated as a percentage of operating income (Salaries plus benefits/Operating Income), and program attendance was collected and calculated as attendance per capita (Program Attendance/Population Served). If a library was not listed in the Public Library Data Service Statistical Report, the data was collected for the same year or the closest year available from the state library's statistical resources, the annual report or the library's website.

Volunteer hours for the fiscal year were difficult to collect. They are often measured inconsistently or are not collected at all. The Public Library Data Service does not collect them. But, when available, volunteer hours were found on the state library's statistical resources, the library's annual report, the library's website and in one case, on the County Board of Supervisor's website. Volunteer hours for the year were valued at $15.39 per hour based on data from the *Independent Sector* and calculated as a percent of the total operating income (Volunteer Hours Year * 15.39/Operating Income) for comparison with salaries and other variables (Independent Sector, 2001).

In addition to annual financial data, information was collected about library programs scheduled for six months between January and June 2002 from the library and friends of the library websites. Since library programs are one of the primary services offered by the library, and the types of programs offered might influence levels of social capital by bridging gaps between social groups, additional data was collected on the target audience for library programs. The data was difficult to collect since libraries tend to publish their calendar of events

inconsistently, with varying levels of descriptive detail. In some cases it was difficult to identify the frequency of meetings or the intended audience for a program. Some libraries only publish program schedules for one or two months. In these cases, an estimating factor was used to calculate how many meetings would occur in six months. So, for example, if a program is scheduled on the calendar to occur four times per month, but only the current month and following month are posted, the number of programs in six months would be estimated as the number of programs currently posted (8) times three (24), to arrive at six months.

Programs were counted and categorized by subject type, target age group and language group. The categories included:

> **Art, Poetry, Film, Literature or Performing Art:** includes art projects, quilting, reading groups, story-times, poetry readings, poetry workshops, writing classes for writers, theater events, concerts and dance performances by professional or amateur dancers. This category also includes community history, genealogy and ethnic heritage programs.
>
> **Exercise/Dance Activity:** includes exercise and dance classes in which library users are actively involved such as Tai Chi, Aerobics, Martial Arts lessons and Ball Room dance lessons.
>
> **Literacy and ESL:** includes literacy and English as a Foreign Language classes.
>
> **Information Literacy:** includes library tours and bibliographic instruction. This can include Internet searching classes if designed for searching specific topics such as consumer health information or college preparation information.

**Health and Safety:** programs on health awareness, health insurance, combating violence in the community, CPR classes, presentations by local law enforcement, firemen and women.

**Career and Employment:** job fairs, resume workshops, career orientations.

**Business, Financial Planning, Tax:** investing presentations or investment club meetings, SBA related presentations or classes including SCORE programs, marketing research, tax planning and estate planning.

**Computers and Technology:** courses in computer software such as Microsoft Word or Excel, using email, using a mouse, Internet basics or training in specific technologies.

**Ecology and Science:** includes outdoor treasure hunts, science projects and lectures on scientific topics.

**Immigration and Citizenship:** includes citizenship preparation classes and orientations to American culture for recent immigrants. (Though some public libraries hold such classes, none of those randomly selected for this study had them).

**Bookmobile:** identifies whether the library has a bookmobile or not and the number of stops it makes in the six month period.

**Book sale:** the number of book sales held.

**Civic or Outside Association Meeting:** library board meetings and meetings of groups or associations organized outside the library that use the facilities meeting rooms including town halls, PTA meetings, clubs and more.

Within each type of program, the audience and audience language were identified from program descriptions. Age groups included *mixed*, *senior*, *adult*,

*young adult* and *children* while language groups included *monolingual* and *multilingual*. If the program description specifically states the program is designed for *adults*, *children*, *teens or young adults* or *seniors* it was categorized as such, otherwise the program was categorized as *mixed* meaning it is intended for people of more than one age group. Reading groups that indicate they are for *adults* were categorized as *mixed* age groups unless a specific "rival" program for seniors was also present at the library. For this study, children are defined as those from age zero to six and young adults ranged from age 7 or 8 to 18.

Programs that specifically welcome people who speak different languages were classified as *multilingual*, whereas programs that do not specify or that are expressly designed for speakers of one language (for example, English or Spanish or Russian) were categorized as *monolingual*. These distinctions in age groups and audience language may help to further identify bridging and bonding relationships that are fostered by the library.

Finally, the annual and program data for the libraries were compared against the social capital indicator from the Saguaro Seminar's Social *Capital Community Benchmark Survey* using a Spearman correlation test to identify relationships between these factors and social capital in the community.

FINDINGS

The Spearman correlations compared the social capital score for the community with the calculated annual financial data (local and non-governmental funding, salaries and benefits, and volunteering as a percent of operating income and program attendance per capita). Similarly, correlations compared the social capital score with the different program types. The following tables summarize the findings.

Table 1

*Social Capital in relation to Local and Non-Governmental Funding and Volunteer Effort (correlation coefficients).*

| **Factor** | **Local funding as % of operating income** | **Non-governmental funding as % of operating income** | **Volunteer hours as % of operating income** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social Capital (High/Low) | 0.113 | 0.226 | 0.342 |

Of all of the variables, volunteering seems to bear the greatest relation to the level of social capital, while local and non-governmental funding as a percent of operating income also vary with social capital to a lesser degree.

Table 2

*Local and Non-Governmental Funding, Salaries and Volunteer Effort (correlation coefficients)*

| Factor | Salaries as % of operating income | Volunteer hours as % of operating income |
|---|---|---|
| Local funding as % of operating income | 0.377 | 0.341 |
| Non-governmental funding as % of operating income | 0.429 | 0.022 |

The amount of local funding as a percent of the budget corresponds fairly well with the amount of budget dedicated to librarians' salaries and equivalent effort received from volunteers. But the amount of non-governmental funding in the budget corresponds strongly with salaries, and not with volunteer effort.

Table 3

*Program Attendance in relation with Social Capital, Local and Non-Governmental Funding (correlation coefficients).*

| Factor | Social Capital (High/Low) | Non-governmental funding as % of operating income | Local funding as % of operating income |
|---|---|---|---|
| Program attendance per capita | 0.094 | 0.024 | 0.203 |

Program attendance per capita does not change based on the level of social capital in the community. But there does appear to be a slightly stronger relationship between local funding as a percent of the library's total operating

income and program attendance. Non-governmental funding appears to be much less influenced by program attendance.

Table 4

*Program Attendance in relation with Librarians' Salaries and Volunteer Effort (correlation coefficients).*

| **Factor** | **Salaries and benefits as % of operating income** | **Volunteer Hours as % of operating income** |
|---|---|---|
| Program attendance per capita | 0.274 | 0.252 |

Also, program attendance seems to correlate almost equally with librarians' salaries as a percent of income and volunteer effort as a percent of income.

Table 5 summarizes the types of programs, target audiences and languages that seem to be related to levels of social capital in the community. Those that have a higher correlation coefficient tend to be more strongly related to levels of social capital. Those that attract either a multilingual audience or an audience of mixed age groups and are strongly related to levels of social capital are categorized as conducive to creating bridging capital and those with a monolingual audience or single age group are categorized as conducive to creating bonding capital.

Table 5

*Types of Library Programs and Social Capital*

| | **High/Low Social Capital Correlation Coefficient** | **Bonding Capital** | **Bridging Capital** |
|---|---|---|---|
| All Programs | **.396*** | | |
| Monolingual Audience | **.448*** | **x** | |
| Multilingual Audience | 0.113 | | |
| Mixed Ages | 0.192 | | |
| Seniors | 0.173 | | |
| Adults | **.481**** | **x** | |
| Young Adults | **0.338** | **x** | |
| Children | 0.1 | | |
| Performing, Fine Arts, Story-time and Literature Programs | **0.227** | | |
| Monolingual Audience | **0.224** | **x** | |
| Multilingual Audience | 0.075 | | |
| Mixed Ages | **0.251** | | **x** |
| Seniors | 0.23 | | |
| Adults | **.379*** | **x** | |
| Young Adults | **.386*** | **x** | |
| Children | 0.14 | | |
| Literacy + English as a Foreign Language Programs | **.365*** | | |
| Monolingual Audience | **0.232** | **x** | |
| Multilingual Audience | **0.286** | | **x** |
| Mixed Ages | **.365*** | | **x** |
| Seniors | . | | |
| Adults | . | | |
| Young Adults | . | | |
| Children | . | | |
| Information Literacy Programs | 0.01 | | |
| Monolingual Audience | 0.01 | | |
| Multilingual Audience | . | | |
| Mixed Ages | 0.01 | | |
| Seniors | . | | |
| Adults | . | | |
| Young Adults | **0.232** | **x** | |
| Children | . | | |
| Health and Safety Programs | 0.087 | | |
| Monolingual Audience | 0.087 | | |
| Multilingual Audience | . | | |
| Mixed Ages | 0.017 | | |
| Seniors | **0.232** | **x** | |
| Adults | 0.139 | | |
| Young Adults | . | | |
| Children | 0.139 | | |

| | High/Low Social Capital Correlation Coefficient | Bonding Capital | Bridging Capital |
|---|---|---|---|
| Business and Tax Programs | 0.039 | | |
| Monolingual Audience | 0.029 | | |
| Multilingual Audience | **0.232** | | **x** |
| Mixed Ages | 0.039 | | |
| Seniors | . | | |
| Adults | . | | |
| Young Adults | . | | |
| Children | . | | |
| Computer Skills Programs | **0.306** | | |
| Monolingual Audience | 0.306 | | |
| Multilingual Audience | . | | |
| Mixed Ages | **.388*** | | **x** |
| Seniors | 0.18 | | |
| Adults | 0.139 | | |
| Young Adults | 0.139 | | |
| Children | . | | |
| Association Meetings | 0.066 | | |
| Monolingual Audience | 0.066 | | |
| Multilingual Audience | . | | |
| Mixed Ages | 0.118 | | |
| Seniors | . | | |
| Adults | . | | |
| Young Adults | **0.209** | **x** | |
| Children | . | | |

*Note*. Number of Rows in Working File 32
*Correlation is significant at the .05 level
**Correlation is significant at the .01 level

## ANALYSIS

Though the data do not reveal statistically significant relationships, some observations can be made. Volunteering appears to be an important factor in garnering local support for the library. Also, specific types of programs appear to correlate with social capital levels in the community and may represent the types of services that the library can offer to create capital in the community. City size did not play any role in this study since figures were calculated as percentages or as per capita amounts rather than absolute amounts and as mentioned earlier, the size of the city tends not to affect levels of social capital.

With respect to volunteering, Usulaner convincingly argues in his study *Producing and Consuming Trust* (2000) that volunteering does not create social capital. Nonetheless, it may still be an important factor to track. This study has shown that volunteering at the library correlates with social capital levels in the community (Table 1), though the direction of its effect on social capital may not be evident. Usulaner argues that volunteering actually consumes trust. For example in the case of the library, the volunteer does not need to trust librarians to sign up to volunteer; that is, the volunteer does not give or posit trust, hence capital, in the library. In fact, the volunteer risks very little on an interpersonal level when signing up. Whether the experience is positive or negative, he or she can withdraw at any time. So volunteering may be a sign of trust, but it does not

create trust in the library or its personnel. Nonetheless, as Tables 1 and 2 suggest, volunteering may correlate indirectly with social capital in the form of local funding for the library. Volunteers may informally or formally recruit local funding for the library in their own social circles outside of the library. Indeed, Usulaner and Putnam would agree that charitable giving or local funding is a strong indicator of trust in an organization. It requires a certain level of confidence, or faith, in the library as an institution and in its personnel for a local official, citizen or company to budget or donate additional money to the library. Future studies should focus on these three factors (volunteering, local funding and social capital in the community) over time to isolate causation.

The correlations found between social capital and non-governmental funding are less clear. Table 2 shows that non-governmental funding correlates much more strongly with librarians' salaries than with volunteering, which may simply indicate the library has strategically chosen to devote more income to librarians who can write grants to attract monies from outside of the community. Or it may be that librarians are indeed leveraging their social networks to attract donations, which would represent an indirect causal relationship between librarians and non-governmental entities to fund the library. If this were the case, charitable giving as a result of those social relationships would be a sign of social capital or external trust in the organization. This dynamic could be better studied if the sources of non-governmental funding were broken down further and traced through the social dimension between librarians, perhaps volunteers, and the donating organization. Libraries should consider tracing and recording sources

of income based on the lobbying activities of their staff and volunteers as part of the organization's performance indicators.

Program attendance per capita does not seem to depend on social capital levels (Table 3). Libraries should not expect sheer numbers of attendance to increase as a result of increased trust or social engagement in the community, rather, they should expect that the quality of the relationships between people to change. Perhaps increased trust is a better outcome measure for library programs than number of people attending. It is also important to note that program attendance per capita varies almost equally with librarians' salaries and equivalent volunteer effort (Table 4). This may suggest that people attend library programs not for professional information seeking advice but for other social experiences irrespective of the professional status of the staff. In fact, since program attendance per capita does seem to be more influenced by local funding than funding from private entities and donations (Table 3), perhaps people are more encouraged to attend programs when there is more financial support for the library in the immediate community and more social support in the form of volunteering.

Finally, an analysis of six months of program data broken down by subject categories, age and linguistic groups suggest that there are certain types of programs offered by public libraries to particular age and language groups that correlate with social capital levels. Programs offered specifically to adults appear to be most important. Also, certain programs targeted to young adults, particularly in the areas of the arts and literature and information literacy stand

out. Scheduled association meetings in the library for young adult clubs also appear to be related to levels of social capital. Literacy classes and English as a Foreign Language classes announced for audiences of all ages also seem to reflect social capital levels, regardless of whether the courses are offered for a monolingual audience (e.g., solely English speakers or solely Cantonese speakers) or for a multilingual audience (e.g., speakers of English, Cantonese and Spanish in the same class). Other programs that correlate with social capital levels include health and safety programs for seniors, business and tax programs for multilingual audiences and computer skills programs for mixed age groups. Curiously, none of the libraries selected for this study offered citizenship classes, which may indicate a significant decline in the libraries' role in cultivating civic engagement. Future studies may conduct time series analyses on the life span of the particular types of programs and audiences identified in this study and social capital levels to identify causation.

In conclusion, volunteering and local funding may indicate important sources of support for the library or sources of social capital the library can depend upon. On the other hand, certain types of library programs may actually create or influence social capital levels in the community. The programs that correspond to social capital levels and encourage bridging and bonding relationships may prove to be the most fruitful, particularly the business and tax programs for multilingual audiences, computer skills programs for mixed ages, literacy and English as a Foreign Language programs for mixed age audiences, arts and literature programs for mixed ages and programs designed specifically

for adults and young adults. This study has identified that those particular aspects of library administration and service relate to social capital in the community.

## CRITIQUE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the interest of encouraging future research in social capital and library service, this section will discuss some limitations of this study and areas for improvement. The current study represents one of the first attempts in the field of library science to isolate certain specific aspects of the library's administration and services that may depend upon or create social capital in a community. From the specific variables studied such as volunteering, local and non-governmental funding and particular library programs, future research may analyze those variables over time to determine causation with greater certainty.

Further studies could also focus on certain aspects of this study that were not covered. First, statistics about library programs, target audiences and volunteering are not available in a standardized way on a national level. Developing a standardized method for collecting data for those factors may improve a library's ability to analyze the social role it plays in the community. This study attempted to collect data about those aspects from library websites and existing statistical sources in the absence of better sources. Before further research in social capital can continue in library science, this issue must be addressed.

Second, future studies may explore in more depth the aspect of trust in the library and trust as a result of engagement in library programs. Perhaps by tracking program attendees to determine how their interests and projects have

been enhanced by library programs and levels of generalized trust in the library or in librarians has increased over time, researchers can paint a richer picture of that aspect of social capital.

Finally, this study did not analyze certain distress variables for the library such as book challenges and funding cuts in the context of social capital. These would also present important indicators of declining social capital or trust in the library.

With respect to the social capital measures used in this study, the author recommends that future researchers use a different tool to measure social capital than the Saguaro Seminar's *Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey.* While this survey was the best one available at the time of this study, the inclusion of certain factors such as conventional and protest politics, and associational and faith-based involvement in the social capital index are not as well supported by current literature. Also, the sample size of the survey was quite small, often around 500 people per community, and the geographic dimensions of the communities varied considerably from the size of a city, to a county, to an entire region in a state. A more recent study mentioned in the literature review, *An Exploration of Social Capital, Giving and Volunteering at the United States County Level: Working Paper* by Joshua Galper, uses more appropriate indicators of social capital and develops a social capital index at the county level. Because this field is quite new and active, researchers may consider other emerging studies that do a better job of measuring social capital in a community.

## CONCLUSION

While this study does not provide a conclusive answer to the question of the public library's contribution to social capital in the community, it does represent one of the first sets of results that attempt to isolate the factors that correlate with levels of social capital in the community. It has also suggested particular areas on which researchers may focus in the future. Certainly more intensive analyses of the variables identified in this study may allow public libraries to claim they create social capital in their communities.

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# APPENDIX A

## Saguaro Seminar's *Social Capital Benchmark Survey*

| | Average All Factors | Social Trust | Interracial Trust | Conventional Politics | Protest Politics | Civic Leadership | Associational Involvement | Informal Socializing | Diversity of Friendships | Giving and Volunteering | Faith-based Engagement | Social Capital Equality |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rural S. Dakota | **119** | 150 | 143 | 124 | 93 | 161 | 116 | 84 | 74 | 127 | 128 | 109 |
| Seattle (WA) | **115** | 118 | 111 | 113 | 138 | 114 | 127 | 108 | 148 | 102 | 85 | 101 |
| Montana | **115** | 118 | 120 | 130 | 109 | 114 | 123 | 118 | 101 | 105 | 95 | 130 |
| Bismarck (ND) | **111** | 131 | 124 | 136 | 91 | 122 | 106 | 122 | 59 | 109 | 120 | 106 |
| Grand Rapids (city of) | **107** | 111 | 108 | 96 | 102 | 99 | 116 | 99 | 100 | 123 | 119 | 103 |
| Boulder County (CO) | **106** | 108 | 115 | 98 | 121 | 112 | 113 | 104 | 128 | 90 | 76 | 104 |
| Kalamazoo County (MI) | **106** | 103 | 99 | 89 | 108 | 98 | 109 | 132 | 111 | 108 | 99 | 109 |
| Lewiston-Auburn (ME) | **105** | 104 | 131 | 135 | 104 | 92 | 79 | 133 | 89 | 86 | 87 | 114 |
| Detroit Metro/7 cty (MI) | **105** | 90 | 94 | 104 | 114 | 96 | 118 | 121 | 98 | 102 | 103 | 113 |
| Minneapolis (MN) | **104** | 111 | 110 | 109 | 103 | 85 | 103 | 105 | 110 | 103 | 103 | 102 |
| Baton Rouge (LA) | **104** | 99 | 91 | 106 | 76 | 116 | 102 | 116 | 97 | 121 | 124 | 96 |
| Syracuse/Onondaga County (NY) | **104** | 99 | 107 | 95 | 108 | 104 | 115 | 111 | 91 | 101 | 101 | 108 |
| Yakima (WA) | **103** | 98 | 95 | 107 | 110 | 112 | 108 | 116 | 108 | 104 | 102 | 75 |
| Fremont/Newaygo Co. (MI) | **103** | 97 | 92 | 92 | 106 | 96 | 107 | 113 | 111 | 102 | 100 | 114 |
| Greensboro/Guilford County (NC) | **103** | 96 | 95 | 101 | 86 | 109 | 111 | 87 | 101 | 125 | 118 | 99 |
| Denver (city/county) (CO) | **102** | 99 | 109 | 101 | 120 | 105 | 101 | 98 | 125 | 102 | 88 | 74 |
| York (PA) | **101** | 119 | 113 | 74 | 89 | 99 | 91 | 105 | 97 | 107 | 103 | 117 |
| Cincinnati Metro (OH) | **101** | 102 | 95 | 81 | 91 | 107 | 112 | 104 | 92 | 108 | 105 | 116 |
| Birmingham Metro (AL) | **101** | 103 | 89 | 90 | 89 | 112 | 118 | 93 | 86 | 100 | 124 | 102 |
| Delaware | **100** | 99 | 105 | 105 | 87 | 104 | 108 | 98 | 101 | 105 | 97 | 95 |
| Indiana | **100** | 98 | 102 | 90 | 94 | 95 | 100 | 119 | 98 | 97 | 105 | 102 |
| St. Paul Metro (MN) | **99** | 120 | 106 | 112 | 88 | 93 | 80 | 92 | 90 | 112 | 107 | 94 |
| New Hampshire | **99** | 102 | 122 | 90 | 104 | 91 | 90 | 98 | 101 | 80 | 74 | 138 |
| Kanawha Valley (WV) | **99** | 85 | 94 | 118 | 109 | 107 | 89 | 96 | 86 | 92 | 102 | 109 |
| Charlotte region/14 counties (NC) | **98** | 93 | 78 | 91 | 87 | 97 | 114 | 78 | 102 | 125 | 121 | 97 |
| Rochester Metro (NY) | **98** | 110 | 110 | 89 | 94 | 97 | 82 | 103 | 103 | 95 | 95 | 99 |
| Atlanta Metro (GA) | **96** | 83 | 91 | 88 | 85 | 89 | 104 | 77 | 108 | 116 | 108 | 112 |
| San Francisco (city of) (CA) | **96** | 95 | 84 | 114 | 140 | 84 | 91 | 102 | 102 | 79 | 70 | 100 |
| Cleveland/Cuyahoga Cty. (OH) | **96** | 96 | 91 | 94 | 105 | 108 | 107 | 94 | 81 | 77 | 99 | 107 |
| Winston-Salem/Forsyth County (NC) | **95** | 98 | 85 | 99 | 80 | 89 | 98 | 77 | 96 | 123 | 118 | 87 |
| central OR | **95** | 90 | 98 | 95 | 108 | 104 | 107 | 89 | 102 | 76 | 74 | 104 |
| North Minneapolis (MN) | **95** | 75 | 94 | 103 | 111 | 104 | 99 | 87 | 111 | 95 | 83 | 79 |
| East Tennessee | **93** | 81 | 81 | 91 | 94 | 86 | 89 | 94 | 87 | 107 | 115 | 99 |
| Boston (city of) (MA) | **93** | 81 | 99 | 118 | 116 | 83 | 78 | 77 | 121 | 71 | 81 | 97 |
| Chicago Metro (IL) | **91** | 81 | 86 | 89 | 100 | 92 | 93 | 95 | 90 | 85 | 99 | 94 |
| Los Angeles County (CA) | **91** | 81 | 83 | 86 | 97 | 96 | 97 | 88 | 105 | 103 | 99 | 64 |
| Peninsula/Silicon Valley (CA) | **91** | 110 | 105 | 99 | 96 | 74 | 62 | 89 | 106 | 79 | 83 | 95 |
| Phoenix/Maricopa Cty. (AZ) | **91** | 88 | 77 | 91 | 87 | 90 | 88 | 112 | 106 | 92 | 94 | 73 |
| San Diego County (CA) | **86** | 93 | 81 | 77 | 92 | 84 | 83 | 89 | 93 | 80 | 88 | 89 |
| Houston/Harris Cty.(TX) | **82** | 85 | 85 | 81 | 67 | 78 | 68 | 78 | 88 | 87 | 106 | 77 |

# APPENDIX B

## Spearman Correlations for Social Capital and Funding, Volunteering, Salaries and Program Attendance

| | | HIGH/LOW | POP SERVED | PROGRAM ATTENDANCE | PROG ATT PER CAP | OPERATING INCOME | NON GOVT FUNDING | NON GOV FUND % INC | LOCAL FUNDING | LOCAL FUND % INC | SALARIES+ BENES | SALARY % INCOME |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| HIGH/LOW | Correlation Coefficient | 1 | 0.453 | 0.47 | 0.094 | 0.396 | 0.142 | 0.226 | 0.396 | 0.113 | 0.396 | 0.028 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | . | 0.068 | 0.066 | 0.729 | 0.115 | 0.588 | 0.382 | 0.115 | 0.665 | 0.115 | 0.914 |
| | N | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| POP SERVED | Correlation Coefficient | 0.453 | 1 | .897(**) | 0.212 | .956(**) | .757(**) | 0.086 | .963(**) | 0.348 | .961(**) | 0.147 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.068 | . | 0 | 0.431 | 0 | 0 | 0.743 | 0 | 0.171 | 0 | 0.573 |
| | N | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| PROGRAM ATTENDANCE | Correlation Coefficient | 0.47 | .897(**) | 1 | 0.141 | .847(**) | .612(*) | 0.215 | .850(**) | 0.365 | .847(**) | 0.091 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.066 | 0 | . | 0.602 | 0 | 0.012 | 0.425 | 0 | 0.165 | 0 | 0.737 |
| | N | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| PROG ATT PER CAP | Correlation Coefficient | 0.094 | 0.212 | 0.141 | 1 | 0.126 | 0.191 | 0.024 | 0.168 | 0.203 | 0.135 | 0.274 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.729 | 0.431 | 0.602 | . | 0.641 | 0.478 | 0.931 | 0.535 | 0.451 | 0.617 | 0.305 |
| | N | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| OPERATING INCOME | Correlation Coefficient | 0.396 | .956(**) | .847(**) | 0.126 | 1 | .821(**) | 0.233 | .995(**) | 0.409 | .993(**) | 0.096 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.115 | 0 | 0 | 0.641 | . | 0 | 0.368 | 0 | 0.103 | 0 | 0.715 |
| | N | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| NON GOVT FUNDING | Correlation Coefficient | 0.142 | .757(**) | .612(*) | 0.191 | .821(**) | 1 | .598(*) | .799(**) | .694(**) | .794(**) | 0.167 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.588 | 0 | 0.012 | 0.478 | 0 | . | 0.011 | 0 | 0.002 | 0 | 0.523 |
| | N | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| NON GOV FUND % INC | Correlation Coefficient | 0.226 | 0.086 | 0.215 | 0.024 | 0.233 | .598(*) | 1 | 0.211 | .801(**) | 0.218 | 0.429 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.382 | 0.743 | 0.425 | 0.931 | 0.368 | 0.011 | . | 0.417 | 0 | 0.4 | 0.086 |
| | N | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| LOCAL FUNDING | Correlation Coefficient | 0.396 | .963(**) | .850(**) | 0.168 | .995(**) | .799(**) | 0.211 | 1 | 0.375 | .998(**) | 0.125 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.115 | 0 | 0 | 0.535 | 0 | 0 | 0.417 | . | 0.138 | 0 | 0.633 |
| | N | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| LOCAL FUND % INC | Correlation Coefficient | 0.113 | 0.348 | 0.365 | 0.203 | 0.409 | .694(**) | .801(**) | 0.375 | 1 | 0.377 | 0.377 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.665 | 0.171 | 0.165 | 0.451 | 0.103 | 0.002 | 0 | 0.138 | . | 0.135 | 0.135 |
| | N | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| SALARIES+BENES | Correlation Coefficient | 0.396 | .961(**) | .847(**) | 0.135 | .993(**) | .794(**) | 0.218 | .998(**) | 0.377 | 1 | 0.164 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.115 | 0 | 0 | 0.617 | 0 | 0 | 0.4 | 0 | 0.135 | . | 0.529 |
| | N | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| SALARY % INCOME | Correlation Coefficient | 0.028 | 0.147 | 0.091 | 0.274 | 0.096 | 0.167 | 0.429 | 0.125 | 0.377 | 0.164 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.914 | 0.573 | 0.737 | 0.305 | 0.715 | 0.523 | 0.086 | 0.633 | 0.135 | 0.529 | . |
| | N | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 | 17 |
| VOL HRS (YEAR) | Correlation Coefficient | 0.399 | .825(**) | .741(**) | 0.084 | .809(**) | .762(**) | 0.072 | .825(**) | 0.055 | .834(**) | 0.355 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.176 | 0.001 | 0.006 | 0.795 | 0.001 | 0.002 | 0.816 | 0.001 | 0.858 | 0 | 0.234 |
| | N | 13 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| VALUE VOL. HRS | Correlation Coefficient | 0.399 | .825(**) | .741(**) | 0.084 | .809(**) | .762(**) | 0.072 | .825(**) | 0.055 | .834(**) | 0.355 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.176 | 0.001 | 0.006 | 0.795 | 0.001 | 0.002 | 0.816 | 0.001 | 0.858 | 0 | 0.234 |
| | N | 13 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| VOL HRS. % INCOME | Correlation Coefficient | 0.342 | 0.148 | 0.112 | 0.252 | 0.154 | 0.082 | 0.022 | 0.104 | 0.341 | 0.055 | 0.374 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.253 | 0.629 | 0.729 | 0.43 | 0.616 | 0.789 | 0.943 | 0.734 | 0.255 | 0.859 | 0.209 |
| | N | 13 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |
| VOL HRS % SALARIES | Correlation Coefficient | 0.513 | .665(*) | 0.497 | 0.252 | .725(**) | .637(*) | 0.17 | .714(**) | 0.412 | .687(**) | 0.005 |
| | Sig. (2 tailed) | 0.073 | 0.013 | 0.101 | 0.43 | 0.005 | 0.019 | 0.578 | 0.006 | 0.162 | 0.01 | 0.986 |
| | N | 13 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 | 13 |

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2 tailed)
*Correlation is significant atthe .05 level (2 tailed).
N Rows Working Data File 17